

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM RELEASE AS SANITIZED

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Guatemala

Opposition Organization and Plans/Position of Army/
Communist Strength/US Policy

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Guatemalan writer.

Source has been engaged in journalism and free-lance writing in Guatemala for many years. He took an active part in the overthrow of the Ubico government and during that period was closely associated with most of the present administration leaders. He turned against the government when the Communists began to gain influence. He is now a member of the opposition movement.

1. The action taken by the government against the opposition in January 1954 was a serious blow to the revolutionary organization, but will have no lasting effect. The reason is that the opposition is organized on something similar to a cell system whereby no person can know too much. This is combined with tightly defined lines of command and a detailed plan for the rotation and substitution of leadership. The government took its January action on the basis of information it bought from one of the opposition leaders for US\$150 thousand. This traitor was sufficiently high-placed to know some details of the plotting and the names of several leaders, but far from enough to wreck the organization. Actually, there are so many potential leaders and so many alternate plots that it will be almost impossible for the administration to prevent us from overthrowing the government when the time comes.
2. The basic target after all is the Communist Party. Each member of the revolutionary organization has a list of the actual, true Communists in Guatemala. Since it is a small country, we are able to know in detail the habits and activities of these Communists. [
3. Our organization is basically civilian, but the revolutionary plans are founded on the tacit assumption that the army will either remain neutral or turn against the government in the event of an uprising. There are no Communists on active duty in the army at the present time (April 1954), the few who were having entered Congress. Army officers on the average are among the most devoutly religious people in Guatemala. For example, fully 90% of them send their children to Roman Catholic schools. However, these officers like their salaries and we do not believe they will take any overt action independently unless and until Arbenz "crosses the line" by permitting the Communists to obtain power at the cabinet level. This is unlikely since Arbenz is well aware of this "line," and would not risk crossing it. Unfortunately, Arbenz, with whom I was

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once very friendly, can do nothing to change the situation, since any backtracking now would mean unbearable loss of "face". He can only try to maintain the present balance as long as possible.

4. Our group feels that Communist activity is becoming so serious that we must move within a year. Otherwise the Communists may be able to consolidate and extend their influence through their control of labor unions, the land reform organization, the radio, etc so that their ouster might be far more difficult. As it is today (April 1954) only the leaders of the unions are Communist and the Communist spokesmen among the Indians have no real following, who would not turn readily to others if the Communists were removed. The Communists do have a fairly large supply of rifles, as well as a few machine guns, but these arms would be totally ineffective against the army or even against a determined civilian uprising.
5. Much of the strength of the Communists stems from the fact that it is at least temporarily profitable to deal with the government. Hence many individuals are cooperating who otherwise would oppose the Communists. This is particularly true of the large landowners who deserve much of the blame for the present situation. The opposition has received no cooperation from this group. On the contrary, we have documentary proof that they are giving financial support to the Communists. In late 1953 one landowner offered the equivalent of US\$5 in response to a request for funds of an anti-Communist newspaper. It was spurned. A few days later the same man gave the equivalent of US\$100 to a Communist paper. Shortly after this and similar incidents an opposition leader told a group of landowners that they would be considered equally as guilty as the Communists, and would suffer the same consequences ~~when~~ the revolution came. This is the established policy of the opposition, and the landowners are well aware of it. Incidentally, the agrarian reform program has done much to strengthen the Guatemalan economy since it has led to the diversification of crops and generally increased production. It will undoubtedly be retained in some form by a future government.
6. From the point of view of the Guatemalan opposition, US policy, particularly at the Caracas Conference, has been helpful to the Communists and the Arbenz government. It has had the effect of rallying support for the underdog. The US should bear in mind that true diplomacy lies not in the obvious remark but in voicing kind compliments to the unattractive woman.